

# THE RELIGIOUS MUSEUM.

"DO GOOD IN THY GOOD PLEASURE UNTO ZION."—Ps. li. 18.

EDITED BY THE REV. ROBERT F. N. SMITH, OF NORTHUMBERLAND, (PA.)

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[NO. 21.]

\* \* \* **Gentlemen holding subscrip-**  
tion papers for the Religious Museum, are requested to furnish the Editor at Northumberland, or the Printer at Milton, with the names of their subscribers, and the post offices or other places to which their papers are to be sent. ☞ New Subscribers who may apply *shortly* can be supplied with the back numbers.

## BLASPHEMY....A LAW CASE.

[The following case we specially recommend to the attentive perusal of our readers. It is full of wholesome instruction. We hope that it will operate as a salutary caution to those unprincipled wretches who not fearing God, not regarding the interests and the feelings of society, and supposing that the wise provision of our constitution, which guarantees religious liberty to all our citizens, exonerates them from all legal restraint, impiously vent their blasphemies against the God of heaven, the only saviour of sinners, maliciously insult the religion of their country; and cruelly wound the feelings of the pious and the modest. They now know that if they reverence not God, regard not his authority, and dread not his indignation, they may be made to feel the hand of public justice upon earth. We hope it will operate to deter others from becoming such bold and flagitious and shameless offenders, as Robert C. Murray has been. We hope that it will operate to encourage other magistrates in the discharge of their duty, not simply in parallel cases, but in all cases of public iniquity to which the sword of human authority properly extends.]

We exceedingly regret that any persons should have publicly reproached the court for doing their duty, and in doing so should have associated the names of Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jefferson, with that of Robert C. Murray in his impious and indecent blasphemy. Whatever may have been the theological opinions of those distinguished men, we are persuaded that they indulged no feeling in common with that bold blasphemer.]

From the Franklin Gazette.

The following paragraph is extracted from the Democratic Press, of Saturday last—

"At a meeting of the friends of ROBERT C. MURRAY, held at the Rialto tavern, No. 150 south sixth street, November 13, it was resolved that this meeting highly disapprove of the prosecution of Robert C. Murray for the expression of opinions on the subject of RELIGION, which were the opinions of Franklin and Jefferson, two of the greatest and best men, that ever lived in any age or country—and that we now adjourn to meet again at this place, on Monday evening next, at 7 o'clock, and that all enemies of religious persecution be invited to attend at that meeting.

"JOSEPH AILES, Chairman.

"JOHN SYNG, Secretary."

There is in our code, an unrepealed act of Assembly, of the year 1700, which punishes with a fine of ten pounds, for the use of the poor, or an imprisonment at hard labor for three months, whomsoever "shall wilfully, premeditatedly, and despitefully, blaspheme, or speak loosely and profanely of Almighty God, Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or Scriptures of truth." 1 Smith's state laws, page 6.

Under this act, Robert C. MURRAY was indicted at the last Mayor's court, for *Blasphemy*. His council entered the plea of "not guilty" on his behalf; and the case was, in the ordinary way, submitted to a jury of his country.

The evidence for the prosecution was brief, distinct, and forcible. Two witnesses swore that they had heard the defendant, at various times and places, utter the following language—"That Christ was a bastard—his mother a whore—and the Bible a pack of lies."

In his defence Robert C. Murray adduced some evidence of the general goodness of his character; and his council urged upon the court and the jury, that the law, under which the indictment had been framed was unconstitutional—that it was inconsistent with, and of course, repealed by the constitution—and cited the following sections to support their position.

3d section of article 9. "That all men have a natural and indefeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience: that no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect or support any place of worship, or to maintain any ministry against his consent; that no human authority can, in any case whatever, controul or interfere with the rights of conscience; and that no preference shall ever be given, by law, to any religious establishments or modes of worship."

7th section. "The free communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the invaluable rights of men: and every citizen may freely speak, write, and print on any subject, being responsible for the abuse of that liberty."

1st paragraph of the schedule. "That all laws of this commonwealth, in force at the time of making the said alterations and amendments in the said constitution, and not inconsistent herewith, &c. shall continue as if the said alterations and amendments had not been made.

On the part of the commonwealth, it was observed that the Mayor's court of the city of Philadelphia would hardly venture to adjudge an act of Assembly unconstitutional, which had been published under the sanction of the legislature, and otherwise recognized, since the adoption of the constitution. That the law was not inconsistent with the provisions in that instrument, to which reference had been made. That a "wilful premeditated, and despiteful blasphemy," such as was charged in the in-

dictment and proved by the evidence, could not be considered as "the worship of Almighty God according to the dictates of conscience," nor could it be deemed "a right of conscience,"—nor such a free communication of thoughts and opinions as is justly termed one "of the invaluable rights of man." Neither the language nor the spirit of the constitution could be construed to sanction a licentious, unnecessary, intrusive, and obscure course of profanity, shocking to every upright mind, and which, abstracted from all religious belief could be uttered no where without exciting sensations of pain, and of extreme repugnance.

The court, in charging the jury, merely remarked that as to the law no doubt could be entertained. They were not going to declare any act of assembly unconstitutional; and if the defendant thought he could satisfy a higher tribunal that the offence with which he is charged is not indictable in this state, a writ of error would doubtless be granted for the purpose. It was certainly the right of every citizen to entertain what religious opinions he preferred; and, if he felt inclined, to utter them in a proper manner, without restraint;—but while one man exercises his rights, let him not offend against the rights of others—let him not intrude indecently and shockingly upon the sacred belief, and scruples of those who think differently from him. The expression of a mere speculative opinion, in argument or in decent language, is no where censurable.—But if the jury think the defendant uttered the expressions which have been given in evidence, wantonly and maliciously, without cause and without provocation, they ought to convict him.

The jury without retiring from the box, gave in a verdict of "guilty."

Motions for a new trial, and in arrest of judgment, were then made by the defendant's council, which after argument, were severally dismissed by the court, and on the following Monday, the Recorder pronounced the subjoined

## SENTENCE.

You have been convicted of the odious crime of blasphemy, an offence which, to your shame, and the honor of society, is as seldom heard of, as the depravity which excites to it, is hopeless and disgusting. Of the various crimes which, as guardians of the public morals, it is our duty to punish, there are few which circumstances will not in some degree extenuate. The illegal possession of another's property, may be often traced to the pressure of want, whether resulting from misfortune or from unsuccessful crime, and the catalogue of offences from assault to murder, is generally supplied by the operation of real or imaginary wrongs, which animate the victim to hasty and criminal revenge. But for the blasphemer there is no apology. The nature of his transgression forbids the expectation of a profitable fame, and of contemporary



Danville for missionary purposes] very sincere thanks for the generous aid which they have already afforded us, for their resolution to continue it, and for the ardent attachment which they manifest to the cause in which we are engaged. They have a strong claim to our affectionate and grateful regards; and may depend on receiving, from time to time, such publications as we send to our friends and auxiliaries.

I greatly rejoice in the rapid increase of the missionary spirit in your quarter; and in the disposition which you so kindly express towards our board. That we might not be wanting to ourselves in regard to this disposition, the prudential committee have seen fit to appoint you an agent, agreeably to the purport of a commission which will be sent along with this, and of which, in their behalf, I would very respectfully request your acceptance.

We need, my dear sir, the help of all our friends. Our work is great. Besides subordinate teachers and assistants, we have now twenty missionaries (ordained ministers) under our patronage and direction: nine in India—four in the Cherokee and Choctaw nations—three soon to be sent to Ceylon—two to Jerusalem—and two to the South Western stations. Four of these were ordained in this town the last week. It was an interesting day.

With very respectful and grateful respects

S. WORCESTER.

D. C. Barrett, Esq.

The following is a copy of the commission transmitted to Mr. Barrett, which at his request we insert entire.

[COPY.]

Salem, Mass. Nov. 11, 1818.

TO D. C. BARRETT, ESQ.

SIR—The American Board of commissioners for Foreign Missions is known to the world. It has members, auxiliary societies, agents and helpers in all the states of the Union, and of various religious denominations. It has no local or party interests to serve. Its principles are liberal—its plan is broad—its object is vast and momentous. *It seeks to diffuse, as extensively as possible, the blessings of heaven's best gift to mankind.* Its operations are continually extending, its establishments are multiplying, its expenditures are augmenting. For the maintenance of missionaries—for the translation and dispersion of the holy scriptures—for the support of schools;—in a word, for the various ways and means of advancing its benevolent design, large funds must be obtained, and many hands and hearts must be engaged.

By the prudential committee you, Dear Sir, are designated, and very respectfully requested to allow yourself to be engaged, as an agent for promoting, in such ways and by such means as may be within your power and convenience, the general design and particular objects of the Board. You may render very important services, by receiving and remitting to the Treasurer, or to his order, individual or associate donations and contributions; by encouraging the formation and activity of auxiliary societies and associations; by communicating notices and advices to the corresponding secretary, or to the Treasurer, as the matters may relate to the one or the other department; and by lending your friendly influence and efforts in various ways, as occasions and opportunities may be offered.

Expenses incurred by his agency you will please to charge to the account of the board.

By order, and with the affectionate and respectful salutations, of the prudential committee.

S. WORCESTER, Cor. Sec.

A. B. C. F. M. and Clerk of the Prud. Com.

#### MISSION TO JERUSALEM.

It is with feelings of peculiar pleasure, we learn that the American Board of Commissioners for foreign missions, in consequence of late and very interesting intelligence, have just established a mission to Jerusalem, and have appointed Rev. Levi Parsons and Mr. Pliny Fisk as their missionaries. America has thus commenced the first mission to that city, so dear to the hearts both of Jews and christians as the city of David, the city in which the first temple was erected for the worship of Jehovah, where the God of Israel gave for many centuries a visible manifestation of his presence, where the living oracles were communicated and preserved, and where almost all the prophets lived and prophesied and died; and so much dearer still to the hearts of christians, as the place where the Redeemer of mankind published the gospel to a ruined world, and offered up himself a sacrifice for their sins; and from which the Apostles went forth proclaiming to the nations of the earth, that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." It is most proper that such a mission should be begun by the American people. We alone of all the nations of the earth can stand up and say, that we have never engaged in persecuting the Jews. Among us the children of Israel have the same right and privileges as those of us who are Gentiles. It is here, for the first time since the destruction of Jerusalem, that they have ceased to be an offscouring, and a bye-word, and a hissing among the nations.

Bost. Recorder.

#### OBITUARY.

DIED, on the 30th of September, 1818, after an illness of three weeks, the Rev. BACKUS WILBUR, Pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Dayton, in the 30th year of his age, and 3d of his ministry.

Having gone through a regular course of study in the College and Theological Seminary of Princeton; and as missionary having visited his country, was invited and called to take charge of the congregation of Dayton. Having been married to Miss Mary Ferguson of Princeton, New Jersey, last spring; he, with his companion and sister crossed the mountains and came to Dayton in June last. He was ordained and installed on the 27th of August, with the most promising prospects of usefulness—much in the affections of his people—highly esteemed by his brethren in the ministry, and loved by all who were acquainted with him.

His qualifications for the sacred office were above mediocrity—his diligence, faithfulness, and zeal in his masters cause was great—success had attended his ministrations in different places. He preached but one Sabbath to his people after his ordination; but his former labors among them had been abundantly blessed. Many are living witnesses of his worth, and of the power of God in the truths which he declared. His submission to the hand of God and his patience under his afflictions were astonishing. His hopes of eternal life were bright and strong. He often spoke of a pre-

cious Saviour and a gracious salvation. He left the world—his mourning and bereaved congregation—his distressed, widowed, and much beloved companion, without a struggle or sigh, with the comforts and supports of that religion which he preached to others, and which had shone in his life and conversation—with the assurance of being with his Saviour in his triumphant kingdom, where are no pains nor sorrows, and God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of the blessed inhabitants.

On the day following, his funeral was attended by a large, respectable, and solemn audience, from his own house to the church, which had assumed badges of mourning, together with those who filled it—where a suitable and appropriate sermon was delivered by the Rev. William Gray, from Mat. xxv. 23. "His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant," &c. From the house of God, where he had instructed, persuaded, and prayed with and for, his people, his body was conducted to the grave—his house appointed for all living—and committed to the dust, to rest in hope until the morning of the resurrection, when it shall be raised in incorruption, glory, and power.

In Frederick county, (Virg.) the Rev. John McCue, was thrown from his horse in his own lane, and killed on the spot! He was on his way to Trinklin Spring, alone, (his family having set out a little earlier than he did,) riding a young horse, not very thoroughly tamed—he had not proceeded far, when a small negro boy saw the horse running, and plunging with great impetuosity—he presently saw his master fall—his head struck a stake, and the whole brain was dashed out. His own little daughter (the only one of the family who had remained at home) was the first white person who reached the fatal spot. Mr. McCue has left his pastoral charge, an amiable, pious wife, and a most worthy family of children, besides many other near relatives, to lament his untimely death.

#### ANECDOTE.

##### SEIZE THE PRESENT MOMENT.

A man who was dying, sent his son, an idiot, for a clergyman, when the following dialogue took place between them.

Idiot. "Father's dying, sir, Father's dying, sir: wants to see you, sir, wants to see you, sir."

Clergyman. "I am just going to dinner, after dinner I shall call."

Idiot. "Dinner sir, dinner sir, death wait for dinner! sir, death wait for dinner! sir."

The clergyman stood reproved, and went immediately to administer the consolations of religion to his dying parishoner.

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\* \* \* All communications, (free of postage,) to be directed to the Editor at Northumberland.